Tools for America's Best

Resources for Educators, Trainers, and Employers on Returning Veterans and Service Members

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NATIONAL ORGANIZATION ON DISABILITY

Learning About America's Best

Resources on for Educators, Trainers, and Employers on Returning Veterans and Service Members

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Introduction to *Tools for America's Best*

This set of tools was developed for civilian educators, trainers, and employers who have the privilege of recruiting, enrolling, hiring, teaching, or working with returning veterans and service members. These tools are companion documents to *Teaching America's Best* and *Hiring America's Best*, two booklets in a series published by Give an Hour™ and the National Organization on Disability.

Included in this booklet are a number of fact sheets and worksheets:

Tools for Educators, Trainers, and Employers:

- **"Welcoming Service Members and Veterans Home"** offers suggestions for appropriate responses to service members and veterans.
- **"The United States Armed Forces"** provides information for civilians about the military and its culture, which have shaped much of the thoughts and actions of returning veterans and service members.
- **"Resilience, Stress, and Trauma"** will help people understand the effects of heavy psychological and physical stress and threat and the options for getting help—whether it is a veteran, another staff member, or a friend or family member who is experiencing these effects.
- **"Myths and Realities about Service Members, Veterans, and PTSD"** will help people acknowledge and answer some of the common myths that can sustain stigma and get in the way of clear understanding and communication

Additional Tools for Educators and Trainers:

- Two tools—**"Strategies for Improving Attention"** and **"Strategies for Improving Memory"**—will give counselors and advisors ideas and home practice tasks that they can provide to students who approach them regarding the effects of injuries or disabilities.
- **"Accommodations for Learning Challenges"** will provide a comprehensive list of strategies that counselors and advisors can use in helping students overcome educational challenges commonly associated with many types of injuries and disabilities.

Additional Tools for Employers:

- **"Organizational Assessment: Welcome and Respect for Service Members and Veterans"** will help employers determine where their organizations are in their progress toward more effective responses toward service members and veterans.
- **The "Organizational Stress Survey"** will help employers assess and address any sources of unnecessary stress in the workplace, for the good of all employees, for productivity, and for organizational health and viability.
- The **"Job Accommodation and Productivity Support Checklist"** offers managers, supervisors, and employees a number of suggestions for managing specific effects of PTSD, depression, anxiety, TBI, etc. in the workplace and increasing employee productivity and effectiveness.

- The **"Job Accommodation and Productivity Support Worksheet"** offers a framework in which employees can work with their supervisors to identify the difficulties they are experiencing and their effects on performance, and explore possible accommodations. This can be used together with, or separate from, the "Job Accommodation and Productivity Support Checklist."

Resources in the "America's Best" Series

Hiring America's Best is part of a series of materials written to address the growing need for information and ideas that can help our nation's schools, training organizations, and workplaces make a welcoming, productive, and satisfying place for returning veterans and transitioning service members.

The series starts with four core booklets:

- ***Teaching America's Best: Preparing Your Classrooms to Welcome Returning Veterans and Service Members*** offers educators and trainers information and ideas for attracting, retaining, involving, and giving the best education and training to service members and veterans.
- ***Hiring America's Best: Preparing Your Workplace to Welcome Returning Veterans and Service Members*** offers employers insight into this pool of potential employees, suggestions for lowering stress and enhancing productivity for all employees, and information on effective responses to war-zone stress injuries.
- ***Preparing America's Best: Twelve Leaders Offer Suggestions for Educating, Training, and Employing Service Members and Veterans*** presents interviews with leaders involved in a variety of aspects of education and employment of service members and veterans.
- ***Learning about America's Best: Resources on Educating, Training, and Hiring Returning Veterans and Service Members*** provides a quick list of some of the many books, articles, and web sites that offer information for educators, trainers, employers, service members, veterans, and family members.

All materials in the "America's Best" series have been co-published by the National Organization on Disability (NOD) and Give an Hour™ (GAH) and are available for free download from their web sites. For the use of any excerpts from this series, we request that appropriate credit be given to NOD and GAH, and to the authors and contributors.

Welcoming Service Members and Veterans Home

A young man who had recently returned from Afghanistan told a focus group of veterans and non-veterans that civilians sometimes looked at him as if he were from Mars and spoke to him carefully, as if he might break or "lose it." He said this with a wry smile, but also with a hint of loneliness.

Perhaps the best way for civilians to honor and support service members and veterans is to start by recognizing our common humanness, and to let it unfold from there. This list of suggestions combines ideas from many sources—service members, veterans, and people who live and work with them. It's no substitute for listening to and learning about an individual, but it might be a place to start.

Say "Thank you for your service":

- **It's a simple and straightforward statement.** It doesn't require any explanation. You can make this statement honestly no matter how you feel about the wars in which service members and veterans have fought or the branches of the military in which they've served.

If you knew the service member or veteran before deployment:

- **Understand that people change during military service.** They gain some very important strengths; they live through very difficult experiences, and their stress systems may have changed to meet the demands of the war zone. Coming home can be difficult, and people will need time and space to work through their challenges and find out how their new strengths translate to civilian life.
- **Understand that the people at home have changed, too.** Everyone may have some expectations that won't be met, and relationships may take different forms. Talking to others who have made or are making the same adjustments can be helpful.
- **Meet people where they are.** Many returning veterans and service members just want things to get back to "normal," even if they've changed in ways that may make their old perception of normal hard or impossible to find. Respect their wishes, and be a friend while they're going through the process of finding the "new normal."

If this is someone new to you:

- **Recognize all the things you have in common.** Even if you don't know much about the military culture or the experience of war, you do know what it's like to be a human being in a world that's sometimes easy and sometimes difficult. You have common traits, goals, and values. Start from there.
- **See individuals as individuals.** This particular veteran is not necessarily like another veteran you know, or like an image or description of veterans you've seen or heard about. Take the time to listen and learn who this individual person is.

- **Learn about the military.** Just doing a computer search on the words "military culture" will bring up tons of information. Find out about the branches of military service, military rank, and which terms are accurate and inaccurate (for example, a "Soldier" is just someone serving in the Army, but a "service member" can be a member of any branch).
- **Come to know and appreciate military values.** Military training and life in the military are designed to teach a number of important values, including loyalty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, excellence, commitment, personal courage, and devotion to duty. These values can be important in families, organizations, and friendship, too.

Handling communication:

- **Know the limits of your understanding.** If you've never been to war, you can't understand what it's like, no matter how smart you are or how well you know someone who's served. You've had hard experiences, and you may have survived heavy stress and threat, but it's not the same. Respect the fact that you don't understand their experience at war, just like they don't understand the kinds of experiences you've had that they haven't shared.
- **Be respectful and direct.** In the military, rules, direction, and communication are often straightforward. Back in the civilian culture, veterans are often frustrated with the many subtle demands, hidden agendas, and silent expectations. It helps if you just say what you want and need, and trust the veteran to tell you if he or she can't go along with it.
- **Respect privacy and personal experiences.** One of the most common mistakes civilians make is to ask service members or veterans about their war-zone experiences, or whether or not they've killed anyone. These are intensely personal experiences, and you probably have personal experiences you wouldn't want anyone asking about, too. Just don't ask, no matter how curious you are.
- **Don't make conversation by asking questions about the war.** When people feel awkward or don't know what to say, they sometimes ask questions whose answers are too complex or difficult to fit into the conversation. If service members or veterans want to tell you about conditions in the war zone, they'll tell you. In the meantime, look for what you have in common, and talk about that.
- **Be open to what they want to tell you—and when they want to tell you.** If you're close to someone who wants to tell you about his or her war experiences, and you can handle it, just listen without judging or offering opinions. It's up to the individual to make meaning of what has happened. You don't want to distort that process or add to the grief, anger, guilt, or confusion that he or she may already be feeling. Just honor the individual's experience.
- **Honor the things they value in their experience.** If you're close to someone who's sharing his or her military experiences with you, it can be helpful to ask questions that help them connect with the strengths they've gained through those experiences. Examples might be: "Of the things you've done, what are you most proud of?" "Who are you most honored to have served beside in the military?" "What were your biggest sources of support when you were deployed?"
- **Respect your own needs and boundaries.** If someone wants to tell you about his or her war experiences and you can't handle it, communicate that fact calmly and respectfully. Not everyone can absorb difficult information at all times. That doesn't mean you're weak, and it doesn't mean

their war experiences are shameful. It just means you're not the one to be listening to their story right now.

Handling the politics:

- **Separate people from the wars in which they've served.** You don't have to approve of a war to appreciate the people who have fought in it. A human being is a human being, and not a symbol for national policy. Military service requires a great deal of sacrifice, and that sacrifice deserves recognition and respect.
- **Don't use service members or veterans as sounding boards for your opinions.** Whether you're for or against a particular war, it's not fair to try to get service members or veterans to confirm or argue with your opinions. That's not their job. Sometimes people think that, if they don't volunteer their opinions on a subject, they're being dishonest. But that's not the case. Sometimes keeping our opinions to ourselves can be an act of courtesy and respect.

Post-deployment stress:

- **Let go of the media hype.** Television, movies, and the news media love to paint dramatic and exaggerated pictures of the symptoms of combat stress effects. It increases their sales if they portray service members and veterans as unstable or violent. Look at service members and veterans as they really are, human beings just like you, and works in progress, who have endured stress and learned to cope.
- **Become a myth-buster.** When you hear others speak in those media-driven stereotypes, correct them. Learn about the stress systems and human reactions that we all share, so you can help people understand the ways in which service members and veterans—even those who are experiencing post-deployment effects—are just like anyone else.
- **Keep your own stress system in balance.** One of the best ways to help someone else stay in balance is to keep yourself in balance. When we don't take care of our own stress systems, it becomes harder to be reasonable and respectful, and easier to trigger stress responses in others. Stress is contagious, and so is staying calm.
- **Don't startle people.** It's not just service members or veterans: Many people tend to startle easily. You don't have to "walk on eggshells"; just do what you can to avoid startling people. For example, you can walk up in front of them rather than behind them, announce your presence from a distance rather than waiting until you're right there, avoid making loud noises, etc. Everybody will appreciate it. And if you startle someone by mistake, just apologize.

Of course, none of this is to imply that service members and veterans require special treatment. More than most frequently misunderstood groups, they are likely to respond with courtesy even when you tread on sensitive ground. But if you want to establish trust and begin to bridge the gap between civilian and military lives, it pays to learn, listen, and show that you respect the individual and his or her experience in the Armed Forces.

The United States Armed Forces

Part I (Introduction to the Armed Forces) reprinted from selected portions of the Wikipedia page http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_armed_forces, retrieved 2/8/10.

Part I: Introduction to the Armed Forces

The **United States Armed Forces** are the overall unified military forces of the United States.

The President is the overall head of the military. The United States Department of Defense (DoD), a federal executive department, is the principal organ by which military policy is carried out. The DOD is headed by the Secretary of Defense, who is a civilian and a member of the Cabinet, who also serves as the President's second-in-command of the military. To coordinate military action with diplomacy, the President has an advisory National Security Council headed by a National Security Advisor. Both the President and Secretary of Defense are advised by a six-member Joint Chiefs of Staff, which includes the head of each of the service branches, led by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard are all considered "armed services of the United States." All are under the direction of the Department of Defense, except the Coast Guard, which was made an agency of the Department of Homeland Security in 2003 following governmental reorganization after the September 11 attacks.

As of February 28, 2009 1,454,515 people were in the active component with an additional 848,000 people in the seven reserve components.[3] It is an all volunteer military; however, conscription can be enacted by the request of the President and the approval of Congress. The United States military is the second largest in the world, after the People's Liberation Army of China, and has troops deployed around the globe.

As in most militaries, members of the U.S. Armed Forces hold a rank, either that of officer or enlisted, and can be promoted.

As of May 2009[15] Female numbers as of 30 September 2008[16]

Component	Military	Enlisted	Officer	Female	Civilian
Army	548,000	456,651	88,093	73,902	243,172
Marine Corps[17]	203,095	182,147	20,639	12,290	
Navy	332,000	276,276	51,093	50,008	182,845
Air Force	323,000	261,193	64,370	64,137	154,032
Coast Guard	41,000	32,647	8,051	4,965	7,396
Total Active	**1,445,000**	**1,174,563**	**224,144**	**200,337**	**580,049**

Component	Military	Enlisted	Officer	Female	Civilian
Army National Guard	353,000				
Army Reserve	205,000				
Marine Forces Reserve	40,000				
Navy Reserve	67,000				
Air National Guard	107,000				
Air Force Reserve	67,000				
Coast Guard Reserve	11,000				
Total Reserve	**850,000**				
Other DOD Personnel					97,976

Prospective service members are often recruited from high school and college, the target age being those ages 18 to 28. With the permission of a parent or guardian, applicants can enlist at the age of 17 and participate in the Delayed Entry Program (DEP). In this program, the applicant is given the opportunity to participate in locally sponsored military-related activities, which can range from sports to competitions (each recruiting station DEP program will vary), led by recruiters or other military liaisons.

After enlistment, new recruits undergo Basic Training (also known as boot camp in the Navy, Coast Guard and Marines), followed by schooling in their primary Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)or Navy Enlisted Code (NEC) at any of the numerous MOS/NEC training facilities around the world. Each branch conducts basic training differently.

Part II: Introduction to the Military Culture

If you're a civilian welcoming veterans and service members back from the war zone, the central thing to remember is that you're preparing to welcome a very different culture, one of which many civilians have little or no knowledge or experience. Excellent preparation skills include:

- Cultural humility, the ability to appreciate the limits of our own knowledge
- Cultural openness, the willingness to suspend our usual assumptions and learn about the other culture
- Cultural competence, words and actions based on knowledge and understanding of the other culture

As always, the most important tools in this task are the willingness and ability to listen, and the openness that lets the information in without judging or substituting preconceived assumptions.

The Individuals

Service members and veterans are not a homogenous group, and they defy the stereotypes often assigned to them. They represent all races, ethnicities, political leanings, and social and educational strata. Although many who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan are young, in their early 20s, there are also many older service members, particularly in the National Guard and Reserve.

No matter what an individual service member's or veteran's experiences at war might have been, it's important to see those experiences in the larger and longer context of his or her life. This applies both to the many positive and negative experiences that might lie outside the war experience, and to the many strengths and resources that each individual possesses.

Statements from some service members and veterans reveal a tendency to feel largely forgotten by the civilian population, and to believe that civilians in general don't really understand their circumstances or appreciate their service. Given the incredible hardships many have experienced, a lack of appreciation by the public they serve may feel like a great disappointment, even a betrayal. By offering your partnership in education/training or employment, you'll go a long way toward helping bridge the military and civilian cultures.

Values and Principles

One of the most consistent things about the military culture is a powerful commitment to country, the service, the unit, fellow service members, and the values they share.

The mission comes first. During deployment the sense of mission and purpose can be intense and gratifying, and many men and women find life at home somewhat empty until they can find a sense of mission and purpose in civilian life. Readiness and professionalism are important qualities in a member of the Armed Forces.

The core Army Values are Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage. Marine Corps code focuses on God, Country, and Corps. In all branches of the Armed Forces, a sacred commitment is the pledge to "Leave no one behind."

What to Call Service Members and Veterans

Whenever we communicate with someone of another culture, we naturally have questions about language. Learning about military terminology and values is an important step in preparing to serve this population, and one area of language—learning how to refer to service members and veterans—is an important sign of respect to the veteran.

The terms "service member" and "military member" are the most inclusive, referring to people in all branches of the U.S. Armed Services (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard) and to both active and reserve (e.g., National Guard, Reserve) components. "Soldier" refers to someone in the Army (Active or Reserve), "Sailor" to someone in the Navy, and "Airman" to someone in the Air Force. Using these terms correctly is a sign that you know a little bit about the culture, and a sign of respect.

With many cultures, there is a difference between the way we refer to ourselves and the way we are comfortable having others refer to us. The word "warrior" is a good example of a term that is used quite a bit within the military culture, and in a number of materials written about the military experience, but a term that might fall flat if a civilian introduced it in conversation. If the service member or veteran introduced it and you were responding, that would be a different matter. But according to one veteran interviewee, using "warrior" as a way to show your knowledge of the terminology would not be a good idea.

Another word that is used quite a bit in the media is "hero." In many venues it's used almost as a synonym for "service member." Its uses may range from an expression of admiration and respect to an attempt to flatter and manipulate. Veterans interviewed have expressed discomfort with the idea of having civilians use it gratuitously, though it would make sense to use it in response if the service member has brought up the concept of heroism or told the story of a heroic act.

Many service members and veterans consider the true heroes to be the men and women who have lost their lives in service to their country.

Resilience, Stress, and Trauma

If you've experienced heavy stress, threat, or trauma in your life—or if you just want to understand someone else who has—you'll want to learn more about the normal ways in which people react to these experiences. But to understand the things that can go wrong under or after heavy stress or threat, we first need to understand resilience.

Resilience

One common definition of resilience is the ability to meet challenges and bounce back after difficult experiences. Everybody has resilience. We all have strengths, skills, and resources in many areas of life. We "grow" our resilience through balance—going back and forth between moderate stress and calm, action and rest, danger and safety. Our bodies and minds naturally build resilience in many ways during our lives, including through our contact with people who care about us and earn our trust.

We stay resilient through a number of processes that involve our bodies, our belief systems, our thoughts, our feelings, our relationships, our sense of self, our sense of spirituality, and our sense of meaning and purpose. All these aspects of the human being are related, and they're all "built" to keep us in balance. As we live through everyday experiences, our minds, bodies, and spirits respond to the challenges we face, and work to keep us alive, functioning, and resilient. Periods of rest and calm, when we're not experiencing a lot of stress or challenge, help us "reset" and return to balance.

Stress and Threat

Our natural resilience is quite powerful, but if we get too much stress and it isn't balanced out by periods of calm and rest, many of our normal responses to stress can be "overloaded." The stress and threat we experience might be:

- Suddenly intense, like a tornado, an earthquake, or an isolated experience of violence
- Long lasting, like neglect in the family, an emotionally abusive or conflict-ridden relationship, a serious and chronic illness, or the aftermath of a flood
- Both intense and long lasting, like combat or ongoing violence in the family or community

The mind, body, and spirit are organized to go through some powerful changes under extreme stress and threat—sometimes called "trauma"—so we can stay alive, save others' lives, fight back, escape, or just endure.

These changes are automatic. We don't choose them. They're built to be far more powerful than the human will, because our survival depends on how well they work in all of us. We may have all the strength and courage in the world, but it won't change our natural human reactions to extraordinary experiences. We may be able to control our behavior in crisis situations, but our bodies and minds are still going to do what bodies and minds naturally do under extreme stress. They're organized to keep us alive and functioning.

Effects of Stress and Threat

Of course, all these responses come at a price. Often we pay this price later, when the threat is over—and sometimes long after it's over. We might start noticing these effects a few months later, or even years later. They might be mild, like a temporary fatigue, a temporary case of the jitters, a feeling of being under a cloud, or a tendency to "shut down" and feel separate from people for a while.

It's normal to have some reactions after a traumatic event or process. It's part of the process of getting back in balance. In most cases mild reactions to stress and threat resolve over time, as our natural resilience helps us learn how to return to balance.

In some cases, though, stress and threat take a higher toll on the body, mind, and spirit. We can experience the effects of anxiety, depression, or posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The range of post-trauma reactions is very wide, and different people might experience very different reactions. For example, we might have:

At one end of the scale	At the other end of the scale
Exhaustion and an inability to get out of bed	Anxiety and insomnia
An inability to feel any emotions, or even to feel alive	Overwhelming anger, sadness, fear, irritability, or anger
Feelings of worthlessness and loss of confidence	Feeling that we're right and everybody else is wrong
A sense of being empty and numb	An inability to sit still, and/or a tendency to be hyper-alert and easily startled
A tendency to avoid thinking about what happened	An inability to stop thinking about what happened
Amnesia—an inability to remember what happened	Flashbacks (feeling as if you're right there and it's happening again) and/or nightmares
Cravings for stimulant drugs like caffeine or illegal drugs that "speed us up"	Cravings for substances that make us feel temporarily calm, like alcohol, tranquilizers, sleeping pills, or prescription pain pills

Why do different people react differently to the same experiences? Many reasons. For example, it might be our:

- Basic body chemistry and genetic makeup
- Past experiences of stress and threat, leaving us more vulnerable
- Other sources of stress and frustration

- Ways of understanding and thinking about experiences
- Ways of experiencing and managing our thoughts and feelings
- Absence or presence of supportive relationships
- Sense of connection to, or separation from, religious or spiritual resources
- Sense of meaning and purpose, or difficulty making sense of what's happened

It's also important to know that the experience of trauma often "plays tricks" on people's memory. The natural effects of these experiences can keep people from storing conscious memories of the experiences. It's not that we consciously or willfully "block out" what happened. It's that our minds didn't put those memories where we could find them.

To make it more challenging, heavy stress and threat tend to "burn" into our minds intense pieces of memory—sights, sounds, smells, feelings. In the future, things that remind of those pieces of memory can set off strong physical and emotional reactions (anger, fear, guilt, etc.), even if we're not in danger, and even if we don't know why we feel the way we feel.

More Serious Effects of Stress and Trauma

If you've been through heavy stress and threat, it's important to take stock of your reactions and see if they might be signs of conditions like PTSD, depression, or anxiety disorders. If you've been hit in the head or been in—or near—an explosion, you might also have a traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Different people have different reactions—maybe just a few signs of trouble, or maybe a lot of them. It can be confusing, because many of these responses share effects with one another. It takes a counselor, therapist, or psychiatrist to gather all the information and give you an accurate diagnosis. These professionals look at all the effects that people report, to see if they match specific "diagnostic criteria," how many effects they're experiencing, how long it's been happening, and what kinds of effects it's having on their lives.

Sometimes people who don't understand these effects might think they're signs of weakness, moral failing, or being "crazy." They don't understand that these are natural and normal reactions to circumstances that were far from normal. These reactions are actually signs of strength, rather than weakness, because they're direct results of the extraordinary things our minds, bodies, and spirits do to keep us alive and functioning under extreme stress and threat.

Getting Help for More Serious Effects of Stress and Trauma

If you suspect your natural reactions might have tipped you over into a condition like PTSD, depression, or an anxiety disorder—or suspect you might have a traumatic brain injury—you'll need professional help to find out what's going on and get back in balance. These conditions tend to get worse over time if they're not treated in a way that's right for you.

Here are some things to know before you seek help:

- A mental health professional can diagnose your condition, help you decide whether you need medical help, and help you work on the thoughts that are contributing to your stress reactions, and on the connections between the past and the present.
- A psychiatrist can also diagnose your condition and can prescribe medication. If you're working with a psychiatrist, though, you'll also want to work with a mental health professional who works in a counseling role. Medication can be important, but there are many aspects of these conditions that medication doesn't correct.
- If you think you might have a brain injury, there are many types of health professionals (a neurologist, neuropsychologist, or rehabilitation psychologist, for example) who can diagnose your injury, prescribe any needed medication, and arrange for rehabilitation services. All these services can help you get your effects under control and strengthen your brain functions again.
- And no matter what kind of professional help you get, you'll also want to do some of the basic everyday things described below under "Keeping in Balance." The more you do to get in and stay in balance, the more you'll be able to give to the people and things that are important in your life.

Different people react differently to treatment. Especially with the right kind of help, many people come to understand and heal all the effects of these injuries. They live fulfilling and productive lives, working, learning, loving, and participating fully in their communities.

If you do get the right help for one or more of these conditions, some of your effects might go away pretty soon, and some might fade and get much more manageable. There might also be a few effects that continue to give you some challenges for months or years. But even for the challenging ones, there are excellent ways of coping, so they don't get in the way of the people and things that are important to you.

Resilience is real. You have a lot of resilience, even if you've been through a lot and your body, mind, spirit, and relationships have gone through a lot of changes to keep you alive and functioning. You also have important strengths in all those areas of life, and those strengths are a big part of what will help you return to balance.

Keeping in Balance

There are many things we can all do to build, strengthen, and rebuild our resilience, for example:

- **Wherever possible, scheduling things so we can go back and forth** between moderate stress and rest (instead of pushing ourselves to get everything done at once)
- **Learning more about our strengths and challenges**—from the physical to the psychological—so we know what to do and don't have that "fear of the unknown"
- **Spending time with people we trust and care about**, people who understand, love, and respect us as we are
- **Spending time with people who have been through** the kinds of things we've been through
- **Spending as much time as possible in the present**, noticing the people, things, sounds, smells, tastes, emotions, and physical sensations that are with us right here and right now, rather than focusing on the past or future

- **Becoming observers of our own experience**, even while we're living it—not necessarily trying to judge or change what we think or feel—just noticing it
- **Taking it one day—or one minute—at a time,** and breaking large problems down into smaller problems, instead of trying to figure out what will happen in the future, or solve all our problems at once
- **Turning our minds away from worry**, whenever we can do that without avoiding the things we have to deal with right now
- **Learning which things we can control or change**, and which ones we just need to let go of, or accept as they are
- **Not focusing on what's missing from our lives**, but focusing on the positive people and things we do have, and laying the groundwork for finding more positive people and building more positive things
- **Questioning our negative or self-destructive thoughts**, and considering that there might be another way of looking at things
- **Thinking about positive experiences** and things we appreciate or are grateful for
- **Understanding that we can often tolerate uncomfortable emotions**, and either do something about the situation or remind ourselves that emotions come and go and "this too shall pass"
- **Being interested in the meaning** of the things that have happened in our lives—not forcing ourselves to "figure it all out," but being open to insights as they occur to us
- **Being open to a sense of mission or purpose** in our everyday lives and work, however large or small that mission or purpose might seem
- **Doing physical things** like breathing deeply, eating healthy foods, getting enough sleep, getting enough exercise, gently stretching our muscles, participating in sports, walking, dancing, and—an important one—laughing
- **Avoiding having too much** caffeine, sugar, or alcohol; avoiding street drugs; and using prescriptions and over-the-counter medication only as directed
- **Doing creative things** (like music, art, writing, acting, crafts) that we enjoy doing, or enjoying things that others have created
- **Participating in positive rituals**, anything from a pleasant morning routine to a spiritual discipline, a religious service, or a culture-specific ceremony
- **Directing time and attention toward our spiritual or religious** beliefs or practices

Portions of "Resilience, Stress, and Trauma" were excerpted or adapted from *The Power and Price of Survival: Understanding Resilience, Stress, and Trauma*, written by Pamela Woll and published by Human Priorities (http://xrl.us/humanpriorities).

Myths and Realities about Service Members, Veterans, and PTSD

Most people have an incomplete understanding of the common effects of stress and trauma, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It can be easy to believe some of the myths (mistaken beliefs) that have sprung up around this disorder. Those myths are untrue, and they have a tendency to isolate people and make it harder for them to seek help. PTSD is a direct result of exposure to extreme psychological stress and threat, so it's best understood as an injury. It's one way in which human beings react after they have been exposed to threatening or very painful events or processes. It involves changes in the way we process stress and threat.

Myths	Realities
PTSD is something that only service members and veterans get. **False**	People can get PTSD and other post-trauma reactions from any experience of extreme threat or pain, from an auto accident to an experience of violence or abuse in the home.
If a service member or veteran has some signs or symptoms of anxiety, anger, etc. after coming home, that means he or she has PTSD. **False**	Most people exposed to war are affected by it, and it's normal, natural, and common for people to experience psychological and physical reactions to those events for a while. But the reactions range from mild and temporary all the way up to more serious and longer-lasting effects. To be diagnosed with PTSD, someone has to have specific sets of challenges.
People with PTSD can't work, because they can't handle the stress. **False**	Many people with PTSD are very effective and productive in their jobs. Too much stress isn't good for anyone's work, but many people with PTSD have developed ways of coping with stress. There are also excellent forms of help available, and many people return to their old levels of resilience.
Veterans with PTSD are violent. **False**	PTSD doesn't make people violent, and neither does the experience of war. PTSD may affect the stress system, but it doesn't change people's basic nature. And military service tends to teach people more discipline.
If I have an employee or co-worker with PTSD, I have to monitor him or her all the time to make sure he or she doesn't fall apart or "explode." **False**	It's not the supervisor's or co-worker's job to monitor people's psychological well being or PTSD effects. People with PTSD are responsible for monitoring their own health, managing their effects, and asking for help if they need it.

Myths	Realities
PTSD is a sign of weakness, cowardice, or lack of character. **False**	Strength, courage, and character don't keep people from developing PTSD, because this condition is related to ways in which people naturally adapt to stress and threat. It's not a matter of choice. But the ability to keep functioning and facing each day in spite of difficult effects is a sign of great strength, courage, and character.
PTSD is just an excuse. Many service members and veterans who say they have PTSD are really faking it just to get attention or sympathy, or to get out of doing their jobs. **False**	PTSD is a very real condition, with real effects rooted in normal human responses to extraordinary experiences. There are very sophisticated assessments for finding out if people have it. If someone has been diagnosed with PTSD, you can trust that he or she really has it. Very rarely does anyone fake PTSD. The effects of PTSD can be harder to handle than people's work duties, even in the war zone. And the kind of attention service members and veterans get for having PTSD may be negative and judgmental, based on a lack of understanding of this condition. People don't choose that kind of attention, particularly if they've adopted the strength orientation that's such a big part of the military culture.
People with PTSD never get better. **False**	Most people with PTSD do experience great improvement in their effects, and in many cases the effects go away. The road back from PTSD means different things to different people, whether that's being free of all challenges or learning to cope well enough to lead full and productive lives. There are many sources of help during this process, including counseling, therapy, medical help, training in stress-management, and the support of loved ones and people who have had similar experiences. Different people respond to different approaches, and often it's best to combine multiple approaches.

These myths are fairly common, but they can do a lot of damage. About half of the people with PTSD don't seek the help they need, and this is often because they either:

- Believe that having PTSD is a sign of weakness or failure, or
- Fear that others will judge them or discriminate against them.

You can help by:

- Learning more about PTSD and its place in the whole range of things that can happen after people have been exposed to stress, threat, and trauma
- Becoming a "myth buster"—correcting false statements and supplying accurate information whenever people voice some of those damaging myths about service members and veterans, and about people with PTSD

For more information about what happens during and after the experience of stress, threat, and trauma, see the Tool called "Resilience, Stress, and Trauma."

Strategies for Improving Attention

Compiled by Jason Demery, PhD

- Get enough sleep, because sleep-loss makes it harder to pay attention. Take a short nap in the afternoon, if you need to.

- Figure out the times during the day when it's easiest for you to pay attention, and schedule it so you can finish mentally demanding tasks at these times.

- Arrange your work environment so there are as few auditory (sound) and visual (sight) distractions as possible. So, for example, to reduce auditory distractions, you might go to a quiet room, turn on a "white noise" machine, or close the door to shut out voices of people in other rooms. To reduce visual distractions, you might work facing a wall rather than a window, close the curtains, or clear up clutter that's catching your attention.

- Use headphones or earplugs to cut down on distracting sounds.

- Avoid multi-tasking. Work on one project at a time, and put it away before you start another.

- Know how long you can maintain attention, and watch for signs (e.g., being distracted easily, making mistakes, getting tired) that you need to take a break. If you need to, take frequent breaks, and set a watch or timer to remind yourself to rest. This may make you a little less efficient in your work, so your supervisor should be informed that taking frequent breaks is a formal part of your return-to-work plan.

- Keep a small note card in view, to cue you to "Stay Focused!" (or it might say, "What should you be focusing on?"), and silently tell yourself "pay attention" while listening or reading.

- "Self-coach" by talking yourself through a task. This is especially important if your verbal skills are stronger than your ability to pay attention.

- When you're changing tasks, put what you are doing into words (out loud or silently to yourself).

- Avoid interruptions. For example:
  - Unplug/turn-off the telephone.
  - Use a "Do Not Disturb" sign.
  - Ask others not to interrupt you when you are trying to doing something that requires concentration.

- Check your work for accuracy. At first, this may appear to require greater periods of time to get tasks done; but in the end it will reduce the time needed, as long as you do tasks the correct way the first time.

- Get exercise. Regular physical exercise seems to help with attention problems.

- Avoid crowds. Shop during off-hours and in small stores.

Home Practice Tasks for Improving Attention

Adapted by Jason Demery, PhD from Green, B.S., Stevens, K.M., & Wolfe, T.D.W. (1997). *Mild Traumatic Brain Injury: A Therapy and Resource Manual*. Singular Publishing Group, Inc.: San Diego

1. Force yourself to concentrate for longer and longer periods over time. (Use a timer or watch to track the time.)

2. Practice attention strategies, to keep your attention focused during movies and leisure reading.

3. While you're reading or listening, add increasing levels of distractions (sounds in the background), to build up your tolerance for noise.

4. Try to complete a physical and a mental task at the same time (e.g., fold laundry while you are talking on the telephone).

5. If you are able to concentrate, try to have the television or news talk radio playing while you are completing tasks around the house (e.g., cleaning, laundry, paying bills, making telephone calls).

Strategies for Improving Memory

Compiled by Jason Demery, PhD

Taking in and storing memories:

- Silently tell yourself "pay attention" while you're listening or reading.
- Have as few distractions as possible in your environment, to help you store information more accurately.
- Repeat information aloud, to help you store information more accurately.
- Whenever possible, use two or more ways of taking information in (e.g., reading, listening, watching a video), to improve your ability to store information.
- Whenever possible, learn information in the way that is strongest for you (whether that's reading, listening, watching, or whatever).

Blending new memories with what you already know:

- Ask yourself questions, because the more you understand, the more you will remember. These questions might include things like:
    - Do I understand?
    - Do I need to ask a question?
    - How is the meaningful to me?
    - How does this fit with what I know?
- When you take in new information, paraphrase it (repeat it in your own words) and summarize it (say it in a shorter way that gives the basics of what you are learning).
- Look for the logical order in incoming information, and if you can't find the order, practice organizing it or putting it in order by creating an outline or set of note cards that summarizes that information. Practice writing about or talking about the information, because that also helps you organize it.

- Use diagrams, shapes, and other kinds of models to organize information. This will help you store it more effectively and blend it with your existing knowledge. It will also make it easier to find the information in your memory when you need it.

- Relate the incoming information to your personal life experiences and your current knowledge.

- When you receive verbal information, picture or visualize it in graphs, pictures, cartoons, or action-based images (e.g., picture yourself carrying out the action). Begin with concrete images (e.g., cup. pen), and then move to images of abstract actions (e.g., washing, eating) and emotions (e.g., happy, angry).

- Group items into "chunks," in the way that telephone numbers are usually divided into area code and two sets of numbers (before and after the hyphen). So, for example, if you want to remember a long string of words, first divide it into clauses or groups of words.

- Arrange information in order by similarities or differences, and learn it that way.

"Finding" or retrieving the memories you've stored:

- Use mnemonics (e.g., the use of a letter, word, image, or similarity to remember specific information).

- Use key and cue words to make it easier to remember important main ideas and details

- When you are trying to remember events and information connected with those events, use your memory for language and visual input to help you. For example, picture yourself in a discussion or situation related to those events.

- Refer to the outline or note cards you made when you were organizing information.

- Ask yourself questions to cue your memory of the information.

- Use the images you've created to recall related information.

Making up for memory challenges:

- Use memory aids such as a journal, written notes, a calendar, checklists, written or pictured time lines, or post-it notes.

- Use electronic devices such as pagers, telephone dialers (with redial buttons or numbers programmed into them), voice-activated telephone dialing, calculators, GPS systems, car finders, tape recorders, answering machines, or laptop computers.

- Rehearse the information you'll need to know later.

- Relate information to your personal life experiences and current knowledge

- When you're trying to remember something, picture in your mind the environment in which you received that information

- Keep each important item (e.g., purse, wallet, car keys) in the same place whenever you're not using it, and use visual images to remember where you keep it.

- To recall names:
    - Have the person repeat his or her name as you say it aloud.
    - Associate the new person's name with the name of someone famous or someone you know.
    - Repeat the name to yourself several times while you picture the person's face or picture that face with special features exaggerated (e.g., if the person has big ears, picture him or her with really big ears while you say the name).
    - Use the person's name aloud during your conversation.

Home Practice Tasks for Improving Memory

Adapted by Jason Demery, PhD from Green, B.S., Stevens, K.M., & Wolfe, T.D.W. (1997). *Mild Traumatic Brain Injury: A Therapy and Resource Manual*. Singular Publishing Group, Inc.: San Diego

1. While you're watching a news clip on TV, come up with key words to help you remember the information later, so you can discuss it with a family member or friend.

2. Video- or audiotape a news clip from radio or television, and summarize in writing as much of it as you remember. Then watch or listen to your recording and compare it to the information you've written down, to see how well you remembered it.

3. After reading a section of a magazine article, newspaper, or book, summarize the key points to yourself or a family member.

4. At the end of the day, take 10 minutes to remember and talk about your activities and events of the day (if there's no one there to tell it to, you can do it over the phone, tell yourself in the mirror, or imagine you're telling someone). Try to recall specific information, such as the time you finished a particular activity, the location of the activity, the people you were with (including the people you didn't know), problems you had, and any new information you learned.

5. Prepare for the next day by recalling the tasks you still need to finish, as well as other responsibilities you'll need to finish tomorrow.

6. Recall your weekly activities and compare them to your written list of to-do's for accuracy.

7. At the beginning of the week, recall 3-5 people you talked to during the week before. To make it a little more challenging, try to remember what topics you discussed.

8. Plan a date in the near future to send a letter or pay your bills, and try to remember to finish these tasks without any outside cues or reminders (e.g., signs, post-it notes, messages to yourself).

Accommodations for Learning Challenges

Developed by Duane E. Dede, PhD, Valerie Pitzer, PhD, and Susan Swiderski

This tool is for educators and trainers who want to help students/trainees with brain injuries and other conditions that can make learning more difficult. It can be duplicated and used as a checklist for organizing accommodation information for an individual student/trainee.

1. Accommodations		
Test Modifications		
	1.	Additional time
	2.	Reader
	3.	Oral responses
	4.	Take test in testing lab
	5.	Enlarge test
	6.	Divide test
	7.	Read test questions on tape
	8.	Test proofreader
	9.	Alternative to computer scored answer sheets
	10.	Mark exam rather than separate answer sheet
	11.	Provide blank card or paper to assist with reading
	12.	Fact sheet, formula sheet (memory)
	13.	Auxiliary aids
	14.	Use computer, calculator, or Franklin Speller
	15.	Special lighting (scotopic sensitivity syndrome)
	16.	Allow breaks during testing
	17.	CLAST accommodations
Auxiliary Aids		
	1.	Textbook on tape (when appropriate)
	2.	Recordings for Blind and Dyslexic students or trainees
	3.	Talking and/or printing calculator
Curriculum Modifications		
	1.	Course substitution in mathematics
	2.	Course substitution in foreign language
	3.	CLAST waiver
	4.	Administrative withdrawal
	5.	Reduced course load
	6.	Extension of number of times a student can take a certain course
Grading Modifications		
	1.	No penalty for spelling errors
	2.	Extended time for major assignments

Classroom Modification		
	1.	Teacher's notes photocopied
	2.	Tape record lectures
	3.	Note taker
	4.	Use lap top computer for note taking
	5.	Preferential seating
2. Additional Academic Accommodations		
Accommodations for Reading		
	1.	Ask to have textbooks taped
	2.	Ask for a reader service (usually coordinated by disabled student service office)
	3.	Ask to have tests and exams read aloud
	4.	Ask for study guides, such as outlines, so attention can be focused on essential information in textbooks
	5.	Ask for extra time to complete reading assignments
	6.	Underline or highlight the key points in textbooks
	7.	Let the teacher know before the class starts about feeling uncomfortable reading aloud
	8.	Choose classes carefully so there is a mix of reading required (some heavy reading, some lighter reading
	9.	Participate in reading skills classes
	10.	Ask for a peer tutor to go through and review important points of class discussion and textbooks, to help highlight essential information
	11.	Work in a quiet study area
	12.	Ask to be informed of any passage that must be read aloud in class so that it may be practiced several times before reading to the group
Accommodations for Writing		
	1.	Learn and use word processing with spelling, grammar and editor checks
	2.	Ask for proofreading help
	3.	Dictate written work
	4.	Ask for alternative assignments such as oral presentations or demonstrations
	5.	Ask for a note-taker in lecture classes
	6.	Tape record lectures
	7.	Divide written exams into several sections that can be administered over several days
	8.	Provide structured assistance with editing
Accommodations for Math		
	1.	Sit in the front of the class
	2.	Ask for explanation of symbols and steps, if not sure
	3.	List steps to a process in notes
	4.	Set up time to consult with teacher outside of class, for any questions
	5.	Work with a peer tutor
	6.	Use graph paper to line up problems correctly
	7.	Ask the teacher for concrete examples
	8.	Ask for extra time
	9.	Use a calculator

Accommodations for Organization		
	1.	Ask for a syllabus before the class begins
	2.	Ask for a schedule of assignments for the semester at the beginning of the class or before the class begins
	3.	Ask for directions to be repeated when needed; don't leave class until you understand is reached
	4.	Set up time to see the teacher individually for clarification
3. Cognitive Strategies		
Processing Speed		
	1.	Allow more time to complete assignments
	2.	Reduce quantity of work in favor of a quality demonstration that the concept is understood
	3.	Limit or structure copying activities
	4.	Teach the use of verbal mediation techniques
	5.	Provide activities to increase rate and fluency, flash cards, tachistoscope, computer games
	6.	Do not require speed and accuracy in copying
Comprehension/Knowledge (Language)		
	1.	Read books on tape, use videos, computer technology, internet, etc., and computer CD's to acquire information through discussions, attendance of cultural events
	2.	Relate new information to prior acquired knowledge
	3.	Pre-teach relevant vocabulary or background.
	4.	Provide specific vocabulary instructions such as common prefixes, suffixes, etc.
	5.	Incorporate interests and prior knowledge areas to instruction
4. Study Strategies		
Attention and Concentration		
	1.	Sit near front of class
	2.	Take notes to force attention
	3.	Find a quiet place to study or use earplugs
Memory		
	1.	Study notes right after class
	2.	To memorize a list, group the items and study them in a rhythm
	3.	Make flash cards with a key word on one side and explanation on the other
	4.	Make up sentences with which the first letter of each word stands for what is being memorized
Listening and Note-Taking		
	1.	Listen for clues that tell that the speaker is giving a key point (For example, the speaker may say, "the first point is…"
	2.	Categorize a lecture into parts (For example, the speaker may say there were five causes of a certain event; then you know five topics will be discussed.)
	3.	Underline or star main points
	4.	Use abbreviations for commonly used words (For example, use the letter r for the word are, or tcr for the word teacher.)

Planning and Organization		
	1.	Keep a calendar with daily responsibilities; include work hours and study times
	2.	Write assignments and due dates in an assignment notebook and on a calendar
	3.	Make a list of things that have to be done and number the items in order of their importance
	4.	Break a large project into smaller steps and set deadlines for each step
Test Preparation and Test Taking		
	1.	Make sure you know what the test will cover and what kind of test it will be (e.g., essay, objective)
	2.	Use relaxation techniques right before the test (For example, close your eyes, breathe deeply, and imagine a scene that is very peaceful to you.)
	3.	Read directions carefully
	4.	Check your answers
	5.	Look over the whole exam before starting and plan how much time you need for each section
Using Resources (text, library)		
	1.	Read study questions before reading the text, to establish a purpose for reading
	2.	Find and use all the study aids in the book (table of contents, index, appendix, chapter outlines etc.)
	3.	Seek assistance from reference librarians when looking for resources
	4.	Seek out all possible sources (indexes, periodicals, reference books, pamphlets etc.)

Organizational Assessment: Welcome and Respect for Service Members and Veterans

To show appropriate respect for service members and veterans, an organization must blend elements of effective management with respect for and appreciation of service members and veterans and what they have to offer, and outreach to their families before, during, and after deployment. Here are a few qualities you'll see in these organizations, presented in a form that lets you indicate where you believe your company is in your progress toward each of these qualities (0 = "haven't started" and 5 = "already there").

0 1 2 3 4 5	Education for all employees on a variety of topics, including the military culture; today's service members and veterans; and ways of welcoming veterans and supporting family members of deploying, deployed, and returning service members
0 1 2 3 4 5	In larger organizations, inviting veterans to form a veterans advisory committee to provide input into policies and procedures, to give the company the benefit of their military training and skills
0 1 2 3 4 5	Respect for military values (e.g., loyalty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, excellence, commitment, personal courage, and devotion to duty) and incorporation of these values into the organizational culture
0 1 2 3 4 5	Organizational support for families of deploying, deployed, returning, and deceased service members and veterans, both family members who are on staff and the families of service members who have deployed
0 1 2 3 4 5	Company-wide commemoration of holidays such as Veterans' Day and Memorial Day
0 1 2 3 4 5	Outreach into the community and the business community on the benefits of hiring veterans and ways of making the workplace more respectful and welcoming
0 1 2 3 4 5	Policies and management practices that foster collaboration, teamwork, and cooperation
0 1 2 3 4 5	Continuing education for managers and supervisors in best practices in management and supervisory roles
0 1 2 3 4 5	Clear chains of authority and clear communication about policies, procedures, and expectations
0 1 2 3 4 5	Mentorship programs aimed toward helping employee orientation, training, and advancement
0 1 2 3 4 5	Organization-wide efforts toward reducing unnecessary and inappropriate levels of stress

(0 = "haven't started" and 5 = "already there")

0 1 2 3 4 5	Meaningful involvement of employees in the planning and development of programs and policies aimed at their well being
0 1 2 3 4 5	Education for all employees on workplace policies, including policies on disabilities and accommodations
0 1 2 3 4 5	Appropriate boundaries between work-related and personal issues
0 1 2 3 4 5	Education for all employees in the options available for help with personal and work-related challenges, and clear access to the appropriate channels
0 1 2 3 4 5	An atmosphere in which all employees can seek confidential help and guidance through the appropriate channels, without being penalized
0 1 2 3 4 5	An atmosphere of mutual respect and acceptance of differences at all levels
0 1 2 3 4 5	Organizational support for learning, growth, and advancement in general, through reading and discussion groups and task forces

Organizational Stress Survey

This is an anonymous survey to gather information about the sources of stress in the workplace that might be making your work harder than it has to be. Please fill this out and send it to:

_____ at/in _____.

You might think of "stress" as challenge. Stress is good for us in manageable amounts, especially if we go back and forth between times of stress and times of rest. Very high stress, or stress that doesn't let up, will make us less productive at some point, no matter how smart or dedicated we are. So this survey is meant to find out how manageable stress is, and what we might do to make it more manageable.

1. On an average, how many hours a day do you work? _____ Hours a week? _____

2. Is there anything about your work schedule that is stressful? ❑ Yes ❑ No

3. If you answered "Yes," what would make it less stressful? _____

   _____

   _____

4. How would you rate collaboration and teamwork in your unit or department, with 0 being lowest and 5 being highest:

   0 1 2 3 4 5

5. How would you rate collaboration and teamwork in the company or organization as a whole, with 0 being lowest and 5 being highest:

   0 1 2 3 4 5

6. If you were in charge of improving collaboration and teamwork, what would you do?

   _____

   _____

   _____

7. How effective are the directions that you receive regarding your employer's expectations and requirements of you and your work, with 0 being not effective and 5 being very effective?

   0 1 2 3 4 5

8. What could be done to make those directions more effective for you?

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Do you see any areas in which there's duplication of effort, (like two people or departments doing things separately that would save them time if they collaborated)? ❑ Yes ❑ No

10. If you said "Yes," please describe, and give your suggestions for making it work better:

_____

_____

_____

11. Please describe any ongoing sources of environmental stress (like noise, dust, bad lighting, uncomfortable furniture, equipment that doesn't work) that might be affecting stress levels:

_____

_____

_____

12. For you personally, what are the top three sources of stress in your job or work environment, and what measures do you think might reduce that stress?

Source of Stress: _____

Measures to Reduce Stress: _____

_____

_____

Source of Stress: _____

Measures to Reduce Stress: _____

_____

_____

Source of Stress: _____

Measures to Reduce Stress: _____

_____

_____

13. List any job functions for which you or others in your company need more training:

_____

_____

_____

14. Would you be interested in training in any of the following?

- ❑ Stress management
- ❑ Conflict management
- ❑ Team building
- ❑ Leadership skills
- ❑ Yoga
- ❑ Meditation
- ❑ Relaxation techniques

Job Accommodation and Productivity Support Checklist

The disorders that sometimes follow the experience of war—including anxiety, depression posttraumatic stress disorder, and traumatic brain injury—often cause similar challenges and limitations, many of them temporary. So these suggested accommodations and support measures are organized by challenge, rather than by diagnosis. (Sources listed at the end of this Tool.)

Overall:

- ❑ Determination of accommodations as a collaborative process between the employee and supervision or management
- ❑ Weekly or monthly meetings with the employee to discuss workplace issues and production levels
- ❑ Procedures for routine evaluations of the effectiveness of accommodations and identification of any other accommodations that might be helpful

Fatigue and Loss of Energy:

- ❑ Allowing flexible start times
- ❑ Flexible work schedules, part-time schedules, and/or job sharing
- ❑ Allowing employees to make up missed time
- ❑ Flexible break schedules, combining shorter into longer or allowing more frequent, shorter breaks (depending on the employee's needs)
- ❑ Scheduled rest breaks to prevent stimulus overload and fatigue.
- ❑ Backup coverage for break times
- ❑ Scheduling more challenging tasks earlier in the day, when energy is higher, rather than at the end of the work shift
- ❑ Optional pre- or post-workday exercise programs for all employees
- ❑ Eliminating non-essential travel
- ❑ Allowing extra time for travel
- ❑ Allowing more natural or full-spectrum lighting
- ❑ Allowing supportive employment and job coaching

Visual Limitations:

- ❑ Increasing natural lighting; replace fluorescent with high-intensity white lights
- ❑ Providing written information in large print
- ❑ Providing glare-resistant filters for computer monitors
- ❑ Designing accommodations with the help of a vision specialist

General Focusing, Concentration, and Productivity Issues:

- ❑ Making sure the person and the job are a good match
- ❑ Mentoring by a co-worker or retired worker
- ❑ Job coaches who make frequent, scheduled site visits
- ❑ Clear expectations and consequences
- ❑ Written long-term and short-term goals
- ❑ Positive reinforcement

- ❑ Uninterrupted work time
- ❑ Stop watches or timers for time management.
- ❑ Dividing assignments into tasks or steps and encouraging a focus on one step at a time
- ❑ Training/mentorship in the skill of breaking assignments down into steps and priorities
- ❑ White noise, environmental sound machines, or headphones (to help eliminate distractions)
- ❑ Private space enclosures or a private office

Challenges in Problem Solving

- ❑ Training for all employees in problem-identification and problem-solving strategies
- ❑ Providing picture diagrams (e.g., flow charts) of problem-solving techniques
- ❑ Strategies for dealing with problems before they arise
- ❑ Working atmosphere in which mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities
- ❑ Providing supervisory support for problem solving and clarification of priorities

Memory Challenges:

- ❑ Scheduling reminders (telephone, palm pilots, pagers, emails, calendar reminders, alarm clocks)
- ❑ Developing work task checklists and making them part of job responsibilities
- ❑ Use of color coding to help identify differences in types of information
- ❑ Clipboards, tape recorders, sticky notes, etc. for easy recording/retrieval of information
- ❑ Assignments, instructions, training materials in writing (limiting oral instructions)
- ❑ Allowing additional training time
- ❑ Allowing the employee to tape-record meetings, and/or providing meeting minutes
- ❑ Posting instructions close to frequently used equipment
- ❑ Recognizing that memory challenges don't mean the employee isn't intelligent

Headaches:

- ❑ Alternative lighting (e.g., dark spaces) for people with headaches
- ❑ Breaks from computer work or reading
- ❑ Adjustment of schedules and workspace light/noise levels for people with migraines

Startle Responses:

- ❑ Allowing employees to transfer to a position with fewer triggers for startle responses
- ❑ Rearranging work-spaces to separate easily startled employees from areas under construction
- ❑ Mirror mounted in cubicle, or sensor mat at entrance, to avoid startle responses when other employees enter the cubicle and begin speaking
- ❑ Allowing employees to work with their backs to the wall, facing out, or facing the door

Difficulty Handling Stress and Emotions:

- ❑ Understanding that symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, depression, etc. may ebb and flow, and that the person may experience good days and more challenging days
- ❑ Understanding that emotionality, irritability, and difficulty managing stress can be common following some TBIs
- ❑ Providing praise, positive reinforcement, encouragement, moral support, listening
- ❑ Allowing support phone calls in the workplace when needed
- ❑ Encouraging use of employee wellness programs
- ❑ Workplace-wide stress-identification and stress-reduction efforts
- ❑ Allowing the employee to take a break as part of a stress-management plan

- ❑ Pre- or post-workday exercise programs for all employees
- ❑ Time off for physical therapy or massage therapy
- ❑ Private space for employees who want to do yoga or meditation
- ❑ Allowing full-spectrum lighting for employees affected by seasonal affective disorder
- ❑ Allowing headphones or soothing music
- ❑ Allowing support animals
- ❑ Referral to counseling and employee assistance programs, as appropriate
- ❑ Support for pursuing needed treatment and assistance, even during work hours

Need for Wheelchair Access and Other Physical and Mobility Issues:

- ❑ Installing ramps, handrails, and lever-style door handles
- ❑ Designating close parking spaces for people with disabilities
- ❑ Making sure the doors and pathways are clear enough for safe passage

Issues of Change:

- ❑ Recognizing that changes in the office environment or supervision may be difficult for some people with brain injuries
- ❑ During supervision changes, maintaining open channels of communication with old and new supervisors.

Sources:

This list of suggestions was compiled from ideas presented in several sources, with significant contributions from the following:

- *Workplace Warriors: The Corporate Response to Deployment and Reintegration*, Marcia Carruthers (Disability Management Employer Coalition) and Carol Harnett (The Hartford Financial Services Group, Inc., published by Disability Management Employer Coalition, 2008.
- "Accommodating Employees with Traumatic Brain Injury," America's Heroes at Work, http://www.americasheroesatwork.gov/resources/factsheets/accommodatingTBI/
- *Employees with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder,* Job Accommodation Network, Accommodation and Compliance Series, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, 2008.
- "Frequently Asked Questions About Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) & Employment," America's Heroes at Work, www.americasheroesatwork.gov/resources/factsheets/FAQPTSD/
- "Understanding the ADA and Job Accommodations for Veterans with Disabilities," Robin A. Jones (DBTAC Great Lakes ADA Center), 2009 presentation.

Job Accommodation and Productivity Support Worksheet

Employee: _____ **Manager/Supervisor:** _____ **HR/EAP:** _____

This worksheet is for employees who are experiencing difficulties or limitations arising from injuries, illnesses, and/or disabilities. The employee fills this out in collaboration with the supervisor (and, if appropriate, someone from Human Resources or the Employee Assistance Program).

- In the first column, describe briefly the types of difficulties or limitations, and how they show up in the workplace.
- For each of these, describe in the second column how they affect job task performance.
- In the third column, list some accommodations that might eliminate the problem (see "Job Accommodation and Productivity Support Checklist").

Area of Difficulty or Limitation	Job Tasks Affected	Possible Accommodations or Supports
1. _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

To increase productivity and improve the accommodation process, what kinds of additional training might be necessary for:

- The employee: _____
- The manager or supervisor: _____
- Other employees: _____

The "America's Best" Series

The "America's Best" series was originally conceived by Basil Whiting, a senior fellow at the National Organization on Disability and former program director for the NOD Army Wounded Warrior Career Demonstration Project (Wounded Warriors Careers).

Early in the 2008 start-up phase of Wounded Warriors Careers, the NOD Career Specialists informed Basil that they had no useful materials or guidance that they could provide to those in educational institutions or training organizations (teachers, trainers, classmates) or in workplaces (employers, supervisors, co-workers) about the nature of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). More important, there seemed to be little if any practical information about ways in which those in classrooms and workplaces could help veterans with these afflictions succeed in their education, training, or work. In the absence of clear, positive, practical information and guidance, many educators/employers, etc. were reacting to sensationalized press accounts about sometimes-problematic behaviors on the part of veterans with PTSD and/or TBI. These conditions did not bode well for veterans seeking jobs or educational/training opportunities.

Since it was the mission of NOD's Wounded Warriors Careers project to help wounded veterans and their family members succeed in education, training, and work, Basil quickly surveyed the available materials. That effort revealed that the resources that existed at the time were fragmented, limited, sometimes too technical, and generally inadequate for these purposes. Although excellent resources were available, they tended to focus on limited aspects of the topic, requiring that educators/employers/trainers gather and synthesize information from a number of sources—something that most would not have the time or the motivation to do.

NOD needed to mount a project to develop the kind of practical, laymen's materials needed by NOD and others working with injured veterans. Basil wrote a paper outlining what was needed and why; allocated modest NOD consulting funds for it; recruited Pam Woll (author) and Celia Straus (project manager, editor, and contributor) to develop these products; and contracted with Barbara Van Dahlen of Give an Hour™ to direct the project, oversee the work of the consultants and volunteers involved, and ensure the technical accuracy of product contents. Throughout the life of this project, Mr. Whiting continued to work as an active colleague, guide, and mentor.

The "America's Best" series took more than two years from conception to completion, and during that time others have produced valuable information in response to the same perceived need. We believe that these NOD/GAH products hold an important place in that limited array of practical resources and would welcome the comments and reaction of the readers and users of these products.

Acknowledgments

Under the leadership of Carol A. Glazer, President, The National Organization on Disability has sponsored and provided funding for this project. Under the leadership of Barbara Van Dahlen, PhD, Founder and President, Give an Hour™ has directed and carried out the development of these materials.

As mentioned in the previous section, Basil Whiting of NOD conceived and funded the project and continued to serve as advisor and mentor, providing everything from enthusiastic encouragement to meticulous subject matter and editorial support. In the development process, Dr. Van Dahlen served in the role of Project Director, providing thoughtful editing of all drafts and invaluable knowledge and technical expertise from many perspectives, including that of the clinician working with PTSD, TBI, and other combat stress effects. As Project Manager and Editor, Celia Straus, MA provided tireless and insightful mentorship, encouragement, and editorial expertise.

The writing and compilation of these materials was the work of many hands, including the following:

- Consultant Pamela Woll, MA, CADP researched and wrote two of the booklets in this series (*Teaching America's Best* and *Hiring America's Best*), developed or compiled many of the additional Tools, and compiled the resource booklet, *Learning about America's Best*.
- Project Manager and Editor Celia Straus, MA also wrote the boxed-in stories and examples of veterans' experiences in *Teaching America's Best* and *Hiring America's Best*. She originated development of the project with Basil Whiting and contributed content and editorial guidance based on her research and writing of her book, *Hidden Battles on Unseen Fronts: Stories of American Soldiers With Traumatic Brain Injury and PTSD* (Casemate, 2009).
- Give an Hour™ student volunteer Micheline Wijtenburg, MS made a significant contribution to this effort by interviewing a variety of subject matter experts and writing the booklet entitled *Preparing America's Best*. Volunteer Ellen Gibson also contributed one of the interviews to this effort.
- A number of the resources listed in *Learning about America's Best* were contributed through the "DMEC Workplace Warrior – Think Tank 2007 Resource List" developed by the Disability Management Employer Coalition.
- Two of the Tools for educators and trainers ("Strategies for Improving Attention" and "Strategies for Improving Memory") were compiled by Jason Demery, PhD, neuropsychologist at the North Florida/South Georgia VA Medical Center
- The Tool entitled "Accommodations for Learning Challenges" was developed by Duane E. Dede, PhD, Valerie Pitzer, PhD, and Susan Swiderski at the University of Florida.

Two additional reviewers also contributed their expertise to the effort: Mary E. Dolan-Hogrefe, MA, Director of Public Policy for the National Organization on Disability; and COL (Ret.) Mary Carstensen, MS, MHA, Chief Executive Officer of Good Stewards.

For the gathering of resources to build these materials—particularly for the overview of resources presented in *Learning about America's Best*—Give an Hour™ drew from its large pool of dedicated volunteers. Seventeen volunteers were assigned to help on this project, in most cases with the literature search process. The volunteers who contributed to these efforts were Jill Anderson, Mark Brayer, Hillary Bilford, Susan Buckmaster, Staci Bullard, Katherine De Launay, Gabriel Feldmar, PhD, Geri Hart, Kate Hurley, Sarah McCumiskey, Lisa Prudenti, Leonora Rianda, Daniella Saunders, Sarah Smith, Christina Trefcer, Micheline Wijtenburg, MS, and Paul Weaver. In her role as Project Manager and Editor, Celia Straus organized, oriented, and managed this volunteer pool.

The twelve subject-matter experts interviewed for *Preparing America's Best* gave graciously of their time and expertise. Their ideas and insights not only made *Preparing America's Best* possible, but also informed the development of the other booklets and Tools in the series. These leaders included:

- Marcia Carruthers, MBA, ARM, CPDM, Co-founder, President, and CEO, Disability Management Employer Coalition (DMEC)
- Dr. Jason Demery, Neuropsychologist, North Florida/South Georgia VA Medical Center
- L. Tammy Duckworth, MA, Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- Carol Harnett, MS, Clinical Physiologist, Assistant Vice President and National Disability and Life Practice Leader, Group Benefits Division, The Hartford
- Ilona Meagher, Editor, *PTSD Combat: Winning the War Within* and Author, *Moving a Nation to Care: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and America's Returning Troops*
- Patrick O'Rourke, Retired Army Lieutenant Colonel, Director of Veteran Affairs, California State University, Long Beach
- Gary Profit, Senior Director, Military Programs, Walmart
- Michael Reardon, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor and Manager, America's Heroes at Work
- Ed Veiga, Vice President, Strategic Communication and Development, Military Child Education Coalition
- Garland Williams, Associate Regional Vice President, Military Division, University of Phoenix
- Mary Yonkman, Chief Strategy Officer, The Mission Continues and Co-author, *All Volunteer Force: From Military to Civilian Service*

Of course, this selection represents only a few of the many leaders who are contributing to these vital efforts. Thanks are due to all of the dedicated and creative souls who have made this mission their own.

Thanks are also due to the Veterans Club members at Northern Illinois University who met with Ilona Meagher and Pam Woll to talk about their group's excellent work and their ideas for effective approaches, and to former club president JD Kammes for his generous and insightful interview.

The most significant acknowledgment goes to the service members and veterans who have offered their experiences and insights to this process, and to all the brave men and women who have served our country in the theater of war. They have persevered through hardship, injury, challenges in reintegration, and often-formidable obstacles to education and employment. From the veterans of past wars whose reintegration struggles have taught us a sobering lesson to the current generation of service members and veterans whose story is still being written, all have inspired and informed this project. Words are not sufficient to express our gratitude for their service and for their continuing courage and dedication.

Sponsorship, Direction, and Authorship

Although the "America's Best" series was inspired by and focused on a single mission—helping service members and veterans succeed in the civilian world—it was created with the help of many hands. This section provides more information on the organizations and individuals who have played central roles in this process.

Organizational Sponsorship and Direction

The National Organization on Disability (Project Sponsorship)

The National Organization on Disability (NOD) is a private, non-profit organization that promotes the full participation of America's 54 million people with disabilities in all aspects of life. In 2006 NOD narrowed its focus to increasing employment opportunities for the 67 percent of working-age Americans with disabilities who are unemployed.

With programs on the ground, the National Organization on Disability is demonstrating new employment practices and models of service delivery, evaluating results, and sharing successful approaches for widespread replication. NOD is conducting research on disability employment issues, including the field's most widely used polls on employment trends and the quality of life for people with disabilities. And the organization's subject matter experts in disability and employment provide consulting services to public agencies and employers seeking to harness the unique talents that people with disabilities can bring to the workforce.

To achieve its goals, NOD works in partnership with employers, schools, the military, service providers, researchers, and disability advocates. Current employment programs are benefiting high school students with disabilities transitioning into the workforce, seriously injured service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, employers seeking to become more disability friendly, and state governments engaged in policy reform.

Founded in 1982, NOD is the oldest cross-disability organization in the country. To this day, the National Organization on Disability remains one of few organizations committed to representing all Americans with disabilities, regardless of their particular conditions or circumstances.

Give an Hour™ (Project Direction)

Give an Hour™ (GAH) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, founded in September, 2005 by Dr. Barbara Van Dahlen, a psychologist in the Washington, DC area. The organization's mission is to develop national networks of volunteers capable of responding to both acute and chronic conditions that arise within our society.

Currently, GAH is dedicated to meeting the mental health needs of the troops and families affected by the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Give an Hour's™ volunteers provide counseling to individuals, couples and families, and children and adolescents. GAH offers treatment for anxiety, depression,

substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injuries, sexual health and intimacy concerns, and loss and grieving.

In addition to direct counseling services, Give an Hour's™ providers are working to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues by participating in and leading education, training, and outreach efforts in schools and communities and around military bases.

With increasing frequency, GAH has been featured and Dr. Van Dahlen has been interviewed in countless articles, television segments, and radio casts, as the mental health needs of the troops have become strikingly apparent.

Individual Contributions

Carol Glazer (Project Sponsor)

Carol Glazer joined the National Organization on Disability (NOD) in July, 2006 as the Executive Director of its National EmployAbility Partnership. She became NOD's President in October, 2008. Under her leadership, NOD has doubled its revenues and increased net assets by more than 300 percent; increased its focus on employment by a factor of ten; and developed important new relationships with the US Army, leading employers, national and local foundations, scores of new corporate donors to its programs, and the CEO Council. She put in place NOD's signature employment demonstrations, Wounded Warrior Careers and Bridges to Business.

For seven years prior to joining NOD, Ms. Glazer was a program development and management consultant to foundations, universities, and nonprofit organizations working to improve conditions in inner-city communities. Before that, she held positions as Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and Senior Vice President for National Programs for the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), where she served on a five-member senior management team that grew the organization from a staff of forty with $10 million in assets to a $3-billion, 500-staff bank with 36 field offices.

Ms. Glazer holds a Master's Degree in Public Policy from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. She has two children, one of whom was born with hydrocephalus and has physical and cognitive disabilities.

Barbara Van Dahlen (Project Director)

Barbara Van Dahlen, president of Give an Hour™, is a licensed clinical psychologist practicing in the Washington, DC area for 20 years. A specialist in children's issues, she served as an adjunct faculty member at George Washington University. She received her PhD in clinical psychology from the University of Maryland in 1991.

Concerned about the mental health implications of the Iraq War, Dr. Van Dahlen founded Give an Hour™ in 2005 to provide free mental health services to U.S. troops, veterans, and their loved ones. Currently, the organization has 5,000 providers nationwide.

Dr. Van Dahlen frequently participates in panels, conferences, and hearings on issues facing veterans. Recently, she was named among "50 Women Changing the World" by *Woman's Day* magazine and was named a 2010 recipient of the Maryland Governor's Volunteer Service Award. She also writes a monthly column for *Veterans Advantage* and has contributed to a book on post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injuries. She has become an expert on the psychological impact of war on troops and families.

Basil Whiting (Project Originator and Advisor)

Basil Whiting has more than 45 years of line and staff leadership in the public and private sectors, for both nonprofit and for-profit organizations. Mr. Whiting served for five years in U.S. Army Counter-Intelligence and attained the rank of Captain. Upon returning to civilian life, he earned his master's degree in 1967 from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. He then spent nine years as Senior Program Officer at The Ford Foundation, in charge of workforce and community development programs, among other responsibilities.

Mr. Whiting served for four years as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA throughout the Carter Administration, after which he spent six years consulting to management and labor on joint teamwork efforts to improve work life, productivity, quality, and organizational performance. From 1987 to 1991 he implemented such concepts in his role as Vice President, Human Resources for the Long Island Rail Road, the nation's largest commuter railroad.

In 1991, Mr. Whiting returned to consulting, working with foundations, non-profits, and business groups. For more than a decade, he worked with the nonprofit arm of the National Association of Manufacturers, helping the peer structure of employer organizations engage more effectively in workforce development. Mr. Whiting joined NOD in 2006.

Celia Straus (Project Manager and Editor)

Celia Straus is a writer/producer for print, video, and new media, with special expertise in the fields of adolescents, mental health, military issues, and disaster response and crisis training. She is the author of *Hidden Battles on Unseen Fronts, Stories of American Soldiers with PTSD and TBI* (Casemate Publishing, April, 2009).

Celia is also a nationally known author and workshop facilitator on adolescent girls and spiritual parenting. She has authored three books: The national bestseller, *Prayers on My Pillow, Inspiration for Girls on The Threshold of Change* (Ballantine 1998); *More Prayers On My Pillow, Words of Comfort and Hope for Girls On The Journey To Self* (Ballantine 2000); and *The Mother Daughter Circle, Making Lifelong Connections With Your Teenager* (Ballantine, 2003) www.motherdaughtercircle.com.

Celia is a graduate of Mary Washington College of the University of Virginia and holds a master's in Literature from Georgetown University. She lives in Washington, DC.

Pamela Woll (Author)

Pamela Woll is a Chicago-based consultant in writing, training, and instructional development. Pam has been writing books and manuals in addiction treatment, prevention, mental health, and other human

service fields since 1989, on topics including stigma reduction, strength-based treatment, resilience, trauma, depression, cultural competence, addicted families, violence, and disaster human services. She received her bachelor's degree from Bradley University in 1975 and her master's from DePaul University in 1995.

Since 2007, Pam's primary focus has been on trauma, resilience, neurobiology, and the needs of service members and veterans. Her most recent works include *Resilience 101: Understanding and Optimizing Your Stress System*, a workbook for service members and veterans; and *The Power and Price of Survival: Understanding Resilience, Stress, and Trauma*, a workbook for general audiences, both published by her own organization, Human Priorities. Other recent works include the *Finding Balance After the War Zone* manual for civilian clinicians, co-published by Human Priorities and the Great Lakes Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC); and *Healing the Stigma of Addiction: A Guide for Helping Professionals*, published by the Midwest AIDS Training and Education Center and the Great Lakes ATTC.

At the other end of the spectrum, Pam is also the author of the *How to Get the Piranhas Out of Your Head* booklet and workbook. You can find many of Pam's materials at http://xrl.us/humanpriorities, and most are available for free download.

Micheline Wijtenburg (Author, *Preparing America's Best*)

Micheline Wijtenburg received a bachelor's degree from Florida State University and non-terminal master's degree in Clinical Psychology from Nova Southeastern University. Currently she is a doctoral clinical psychology trainee and is on internship at the Oklahoma Health Consortium, University of Oklahoma.

Micheline has clinical experience with both inpatient and outpatient populations. She has gained experience working with adolescents, adults, and older adults. Micheline formerly worked as a practicum therapist at the Healthy Lifestyles/Guided Self-Change Clinic, The Renfrew Center, and the Psychological Assessment Center. Her areas of interest include compulsive and addictive behaviors, co-occurring disorders, trauma, and psychological and neuropsychological assessment.